

THE FOUNDATION OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE
AND THE BAPTISM OF RUSSIA

(Paulos Gregorios)

The 9th and 10th centuries of our era laid the Cultural - Psychic foundations for the three branches of the Russian peoples - the Uterainians, the Great Russians and the Bylonissians. The Baptism of Russia in 988 A.D. was the culmination of a process of national formation, the antecedents of which process in the 9th and 10th centuries are certainly worth surveying.

Pre-Christian slavs were no doubt, like other Europeans, Pagans. Common elements of that pre-christian paganism can still be traced among the Russian peoples - for example the great closeness to nature, particularly to birds and animals still visible in Russian folklore and children's books. It is also worth noting that Russian folklore features sun and moon, and wind and frost. In our present environmental crisis, this closeness to nature can be a very positive feature in the Contemporary Russian Psyche.

As a foundation of Kievan Russia were being laid several cultural factors made their impact as the Russian peoples. They were close enough to the European peoples - particularly the Finns and other Scandinavian peoples. But these European neighbours of Russia had not yet come fully into the light of civilisation and remained somewhat savage and primitive. There was little that Russia could absorb culturally from the Europeans of the 9th and 10th centuries. If they absorbed anything it was mostly Finnish blood - especially the Great Russian of the north.

On the contrary, the slavic people, who were in touch with the great Asian civilization of the Fertile Crescent, were culturally ahead of the other Europeans. They were in touch both with the advanced civilisation of Byzantium and with the flourishing culture of the Islamic Caliphates of the Middle East.

Among their closest neighbours was Khazaria, which rose to power in the 7th century. By the 9th century the Khazarian empire had expanded to include the whole area north of the Black Sea and caucasus, between the Carpathians on the west and the Caspian

coast on the East. They were strong enough to **fight** back the Islamic or Arabic onslaughts from the East, and to defend Europe from Asian conquering armies.

The Khazars were obviously allied with the Byzantines in their opposition to Islam, and Bysantine emporers Justinian II (704) and Constantin V had married Khazar princesses. Strangely enough the Khazars did not embrace Christianity, either Byzantine or Latin, but preferred to adopt the Jeurish religion, merely keeping their identity distinct from the Byzantine Greeks and the Latin West.

Among the slavic people, the Volga Bulgars and several south slavic tribes came for a time under the overlordship of the Khazar empire with the Capital city of Itil on the West coast of the Caspian Sea. Khazania, with a ruling elite that was jeurish, was, however, very Cosmopolitan. Pagans, Muslims, Christians and Jews mingled and flourished together, though Muslims were at a disadvantage.

The Campaign of Kievan Prince Svyatoslav, himself a pagan, against Khazaria in 965 A.D. just preceded the Baptism of Russia by 23 years. The Khazars were beaten, but from the vanquished the victors picked up many institutions, especially military and political institutions.

svyatoslav, the father of Prince Vladimir, was a Varangian, or a Scandinavian whose people had settled around Novgorod and smoleusk. Though Svyatoslav's mother Olga (+ 969 AD) was a Christian and is a saint for the Russian Orthidox, the son was a pagan. But as the Khazar Civilisation and its Jeurish elements were assimilated into **the** new Kievan Rus State, the roughnigh of the Nordic tribes.became a kind of refined strength.

There were, however, other elements that went to make up the culture and the national psyche of Kievan Russia. Chief among these were the other two neighbouring cultures, namely that of the Byzantine Empire, Bazantine influence the Christianity of the southern \$lavs and the Arab civilization.

BYZANTINE INFLUENCE

The Baptism of Russia brought more than Christianity with it to the people. Byzantine civilisation in all its aspects was powerfully influential in the shaping of the psyche of Kievan Russia.

Though the glorious age of Justinian was a thing of the past in Byzantium after the Arab conquests, the Comnenian or Macedonian dynasties that ruled Byzantium from the 9th to the 12th centuries. were also promoters of culture and the arts. It was a Byzantium in which tension ruled between the secular and the ecclesiastical, between the rational and the mystical, between Aristotle and Plato, and also between the state and the Church.

It was also a Byzantium that was in tension with the Latin West that influenced the formation of Kievan Russia. Medieval Latins knew no Greek and the Greeks knew no Latin. That did not prevent them from quarrelling with each other and engaging in the most acrimonious theological disputes. The Filioque controversy had burst out in Jerusalem in 807. Pope Leo III (795-816) had enraged the Greeks by his letter to "all the Churches of the East", telling them that "the Holy Spirit proceeds equally from the Father and the Son"¹.

Charlemagne (Ca 742-814) asked his theologian Theodulf (Ca 750-821) to write his de Spiriti Sancto to answer the Greeks who refused to accept the filioque. The Council of Aachen confirmed the teaching of Theodulf on the filioque. The result was the Photian schism between East and West in Europe.

Photius was Patriarch of Constantinople from 858-886. It was during his Patriarchate that the Bulgarian and Serbian Slavs were converted. He was the one who objected to the presence of Latin missionaries in Bulgaria trying to deflect the newly converted Slavs to Roman obedience. In the same year 867 when he wrote

1. See Richard Haugh, Photius and the Carolingians Nordland, Belmont, Mass, 1975. p.68.

that encyclical, he anathematised the Pope at the Council of Constantinople. In 869, the Latins excommunicated Photius at a Council in Rome.

The Bulgarian Slavs remained in the jurisdiction of the Patriarch of Constantinople rather than that of the Pope of Rome. This factor had a great deal to do with Vladimir's choice of Byzantine Christianity rather than Roman.

Vladimir's baptism, at least in the period immediately after, made the Kievan Church an ecclesiastical province of the Patriarchate of Constantinople.

THE SOUTH SLAVIC INFLUENCE

Though thus Constantinople and Byzantine civilisation became the founts for Russian religious culture, the main documents of Christianity came to Russia from Bulgaria rather than from Byzantium.

St. Cyril (826-869) and his brother St. Methodius (815-885) had both died more than a hundred years before the baptism of Russia in 988. But they had already developed the Glagolitic alphabet as a medium of expression of Slavic identity, and translated the scriptures and liturgical texts, as well as several theological works from Greek to Old Slavonic. Just as Martin Luther provided a foundation for Germanic language and culture, the work of Cyril and Methodius had laid the foundations of Slavonic culture, which developed first in the Balkans and then in Kievan Russia a century later.

The Kievan Christians did not have to learn Greek and translate the Scriptures, liturgical texts and patristic writings into their language. The work had already been done by Cyril and Methodius and by other scholars whom they had taught. Kievan Russia took this whole literature from the South Slavs, and thus the Bulgarian literary centres of Pliska and Preslav Ohrid, made an enormous contribution to the development of the Russian mind and culture.

The disciples of Cyril and Methodius, under the leadership of Bulgarian Tsars, Boris, Simeon and Peter led by the great Bulgarian teacher Kliment Slovenski who ran a school for 3500 students in the tradition of the ancient Museum in Alexandria, produced also a large number of original works in old Slavonic. It was the golden age of old Bulgarian literature, and this wealth was inherited by the newly Christianized Kievan Russia. Constantin of Preslav wrote several devotional and exegetical treatises, in addition to translating the four books Against Arians by St. Athanasius the Great. Yovan Exarch, another prolific writer in Tsar Simeon's literary circle, had translated the De Fide Orthodoxa of John of Damascus, the great Byzantine scholastic theologian.

Thus the Russian Orthodox Church was able to worship in their own language from the very outset, and quickly come into the immense heritage of Christian writings without having to translate them. And the contribution made by the Bulgarian-Serbian Slavs to the Russian culture seems just as important as the Byzantine contribution, which has been well written about widely acknowledged.

THE ARAB CIVILIZATION

The relation between the Russian people and the flourishing Arab civilisation of the ninth century was at best dialectical. Egypt and Syria, the richest and most populous provinces of the Roman as well as the Byzantine empires, had now become the two bases of a vibrant Islamic Civilisation, but with many ups and downs in the power of the Caliphates. The Ommayyad Caliphate, established around 660, with Damascus as capital, soon became a rival to the splendour of Byzantine civilisation. It was an Islamic civilisation, though run largely by Christian administration, thinkers and craftsmen. But their power waned by the middle of eighth century, and the Abbasid Caliphate with Baghdad as capital became the centre of Islamic culture. The so-called Nestorian and Monophysite Christians, who had rejected Byzantine domination in the sixth and seventh centuries regarded the Muslim Arabs as their friends.

Just two decades the Baptism of Prince Valdimir in 988, Niaphoras Phocas, the soldier-emperor had dealt crushing blows to the Arabs re-conquered Cilicia and Cyprus and campaigned against the Arab around the middle Euphrates. In 969 he marched against Syria and Captured it.

As the Crusades began in the eleventh century, the Normans (including Varangians) who provided the spearhead of the Frankish army, were to not total strangers to the Islamic empire. Their forefathers, including the Kievan Varangians had made frequent pilgrimages to the Christian holy places in Palestine controlled by Muslims. In fact for Scandinavians and Varangians in particular such pilgrimages were a regular feature of the life of their elite. Stories about Islamic civilisation and culture were brought back by these pilgrims and spread among the Kievan Russians also, as Steven Runciman tells us².

This Arab civilisation was the only serious rival to Byzantine civilisation in the tenth century. The fact that Prince Valdimir rejected Islam should not obscure the fact that he and his people had learned from Islamic culture and art. It was destiny that brought once again the Islamic civilisations of Central Asia into fruitful Co-operation with the Russian people after 1917.

CONCLUSION

The cultural-psychic foundations of the Russian people, as they laid in the tenth century and especially with the baptism of Prince Valdimir, definitely had strong Byzantine and Christian elements in it. But equally important was the contribution of pre-Christian Russia, the Islamic civilisation of the Middle East, the Khazar Empire, which for a time was Jewish, and above all the southern Slavs, whose successors are now in Bulgaria and Serbia.

2. Steven Runciman, A History of the Crusades, I Penguin, 1965, see especially pp.46 about Scandinavian Pilgrims.

MILLEN

MILLENNIUM OF THE BAPTISM OF KIEVAN RUS

BOLSHOI THEATRE, MOSCOW, June 10th, 1988

Jubilee Address by Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios, Metropolitan of Delhi

My privilege today is great indeed, to be part of that universal chorus sharing the joy of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Soviet people on the occasion of the onethousandth anniversary of the Baptism of the Kievan Rus and their Prince St. Vladimir of Kiev. Please accept my humble felicitations and good wishes on this great occasion.

I speak here, not as a President of the World Council of Churches nor as co-leader of the delegation of the Orthodox Church in India. I speak rather in my personal capacity as a friend of humanity and therefore of the Soviet people, as a humble peace worker, and as a close associate of the Russian Orthodox Church during the past quarter century or more, especially in its international and inter-religious work for peace with justice and the survival of humanity. I speak also on behalf of the religions of the world.

I am grateful to God that we speak in a time of glasnost and perestroika. The great global vision of General Secretary Mikhail Sergievich Gorbachev gives me the inspiration to speak about the need for dialogue between the religious people of the world and the secular people about building a future world in which all of us can live together, in peace, justice and the assured dignity of all.

In the world in which we live today, less than 20 percent are secular in their convictions. The rest of humanity, that is more than 80 percent, belong to the various world religions. If we want to build a world of peace, these more than 4000 millions of religious people should have a voice in deciding the destiny of humanity. Even in the Soviet Union between one-third and one half of the people belong to the three main religions of this country, Christianity, Islam and Buddhism. They should be able to have full democratic and open participation in deciding the issues that affect people.

On the other hand religious bodies have to become more aware of the fact that the forms in which they practice their religion today have been developed under quite different socio-economic systems. A thousand years ago the Russian Orthodox Church for example, inherited from Byzantium a pattern of Christianity which was both feudal and imperialist. The church still bears the marks of that heritage. A great deal of perestroika within the church structures will be necessary in order that the church may be enabled to participate in a dialogue with secular

society.

I want on this happy occasion to mention four main areas in which religious people could fruitfully engage in dialogue with secular people, in order to ensure a better future for humanity. I have time here only to mention these four areas, not to elaborate.

The first area is that of human identity. We live in a world in which group identities like those of nation, race, region, and religion are very strong. The question for discussion is how to transcend these group identities in favour of a larger framework of a single global human identity. We have to find out how to keep the smaller identities from becoming absolute, and how to integrate these identities, which are meaningful to people, within the larger identity of global humanity.

The second area in which we can have fruitful dialogue is the use and abuse of power in a democratic socialist society. Scientific-technological power and political-economic power today are not fully within the control of the people, even in socialist societies. Such power today is misused to dominate people and to satisfy some people's lust for power. Since democratisation is one of the major concerns of perestroika it seems important that there should be a proper open discussion of how the exercise and distribution of power, both in developing the forces of production and in controlling the relations of production, can be more rationally organised.

The third area where we can have useful dialogue is that of the motivation for work. We live in a world where work has become simply a means to earn a living, something which you sell in the market in return for a wage. And because people even in socialist countries look upon work as merely the means to get some money, the dignity of work suffers. The Bible says: "Let the thief no longer steal, but let him do honest labour with his hands, so that he may have something to share with those in need" (Ephesians 4:28). The true principle of work must be the right and privilege of every human being to contribute to the total needs of society, and not just getting money in return for the work. Because socialist societies exist in the midst of bourgeois capitalist societies, the socialist principle of work as social creativity is often not understood or practiced by people. Here religions and secular people can collaborate to make work contribute to human dignity and creativity.

The fourth area I would propose for dialogue between secular and religious people is the moral attitude towards commodities. It is important that all nations in the world should disarm militarily and use available resources and personnel for human development. It is important also that the

societies. This is the temptation to assess life in terms of the commodities available for consumption. It is a temptation that consistently always destroys the quality of socialist life. Here again religious people and secular people can join together to create the right kind of moral attitude towards commodities and their accumulation and consumption.

I have merely mentioned four areas in which we could profitably engage in dialogue between religious and secular groups of people. On this great jubilee occasion, I wish simply to suggest something we can begin to do now, so that humanity tomorrow may live with more dignity. Once again I felicitate the Russian Orthodox Church, as well as the churches which have existed here from ancient times like the Armenian and Georgian Orthodox churches, and also the Muslims, Buddhists, Jews and other religious people in this country, as they now enter more fully and more freely into the life of the nation, shoulder to shoulder with the secular people. May God bless this country and people. May peace with justice come to the whole of humanity.

WORD OF GREETING AND A FEW ~~REFLECTIONS~~ ON THE BAPTISM OF RUSSIA

- Dr. Paulos Mar Gregorios
Metropolitan of Delhi and the North,
India

I have been asked to convey a brief word of greeting to this august international assembly of scholars, gathered together in Kiev to consider the various scientific aspects of the Baptism of Russia a thousand years ago.

On behalf of Basilius Mar Thoma Mathews I, the Catholicos of the East, and the twenty brother bishops of the Malankara Orthodox Church in India, as well as of the priests and nearly 2 million people of our Church, I am privileged to convey to the Russian Orthodox Church, to His Holiness Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and all Russia, to His Eminence Metropolitan Philaret of Kiev and Galicia, Exarch of the Ukraine, to all bishops, priests and peoples of the Russian Orthodox Church, and to the eminent body of international scholars assembled here in Kiev, our friendly, fraternal and warm greetings and good wishes in Christ Jesus our Lord.

The Baptism of Russia a thousand years ago was an event of great ecumenical importance, not merely a national event of enormous importance to the Russian nation and the Russian Orthodox Church. I shall give a few reasons for my ascribing unusual ecumenical importance to the event of a millennium ago, but also to the projected millenary celebrations which begin with this seminar and will continue for the next few years.

(1) Today the membership of the Russian Orthodox Church constitutes more than half of the total membership of all Autocephalous Orthodox Churches, which I estimate today at 150 million, including the five autocephalous Oriental Orthodox Churches. The Russian Orthodox Church has today a membership of 80 million according to my estimate. If the Baptism of Russia had not taken place a thousand years ago, Orthodoxy would have been both numerically and spiritually a much weaker force than it is today.

(2) Secondly it is a factor of considerable importance for the universal character of Orthodoxy that the Orthodox Church should exist with spiritual autonomy and independent identity outside the countries of the Byzantine Empire and the Greek-speaking churches. There were significant communities of Orthodox organized in autocephalous churches outside the Roman or Byzantine empires - for example the churches of Nubia, Ethiopia, Armenia, Georgia, Persia and India already before the post-Chalcedon schism in the Church. The emergence of a significant national Church outside the Byzantine Empire in the tenth century, even though it achieved autocephaly only several centuries later, has a major role in expressing the identity of the Church as in no way identified with the Byzantine or Roman empires. The persistence of the Russian Orthodox Church for several centuries free from Graeco-Roman authority and control serves as a monumental witness to the true ecumenicity and universality of the Orthodox Church.

(3) Thirdly, the Eastern or Oriental Orthodox churches in Asia and Africa, as spokesmen of the lands and cultures where millions of people are the victims of injustice and exploitation, have a special reason for rejoicing in the millenary celebrations of the Baptism of Russia. For us, Christians of Asia and Africa, the Russian Orthodox Church and Christian churches in socialist countries in general, are a symbol of hope. The patterns of Christianity established in Western non-socialist countries are not suitable for expressing the Christian identity of our Asian African churches. We are almost all minority communities within our nations, but our people aspire for the liberation of all people, Christians as well

as non-Christians, from oppression, exploitation, injustice and war.

We see in the churches in socialist countries a possibility for a new and more relevant expression of the identity of the Christian Church in a society committed to justice, freedom, peace and human dignity for all. We know that the churches in the socialist countries are still in the process of breaking away from their pre-socialist feudal-capitalist forms and patterns, and expressing themselves in terms of a universal humanism and commitment to justice and peace.

We see the forthcoming millenary celebrations as a stage in evolving a pattern of Christian obedience and spirituality in a socialist context, without sacrificing anything of the immensely precious heritage of the Eastern Orthodox tradition. We sincerely hope that the celebrations of 1988 will be more than a mere triumphalistic manifestation of worldly splendor. We hope that it will be primarily an appeal to the conscience of humanity to stand on the side of the victims of oppression and exploitation, of war and injustice. We hope that the celebrations will highlight the closely interrelated issues of peace and justice, in the context of a humanity-loving spirituality.

It is in this context I wish to make a few personal affirmations for your comment and critique, in relation to the Baptism of Russia, as a non-Russian friend of the Soviet people and of the Russian Orthodox Church.

In the interest of a cosmopolitan and non-parochial perspective, it seems important for me to recognize the general principle that no nation, tribe or people can exist authentically without accepting valuable contributions from other nations and tribes.

The Russian Primary Chronicle (Tale of Bygone Years) says that when Oleg, Prince of Kiev, attacked Constantinople in 904-907, his army contained Varangians, Slavs, Chuds, Krivichians, Merians, Polyanians, Severians, Derevlians, Radimichians, Croats, Dulebians and Tivercians.

In other words, Kievans included many other tribes and nations which were not strictly Slavs, but included all kinds of people of West Asian, South-east European and North European origin. Greek writings sometimes club all these elements together as Great Scythia.

After Oleg had vanquished the Byzantine army and extracted tribute from Constantinople, the princes he sent in AD 912 to actually receive payment and sign a treaty were specified as "We of the Rus nation, Karl, Ingjald, Farulf, Vermund, Hrollaf, Gunnar, Harold, Karni, Frithleif, Hroarr, Angantyr, Thvand, Leithulf, Fast and Steinvith, sent by Olef, Grand Prince of Rus."

To my untrained ear, they do not all sound like Slavonic names. Many of them seem to me Germanic and Scandinavian. It is my understanding that while the Russian nation came to adopt the Slavonic language as their common language, the people who constituted the Rus nation were not all Slavs. And I hope the Russian Orthodox Church will give deeper consideration to this question of ethnic origin, and incorporate the findings into its own ethnic consciousness. I am glad that in the Soviet Union which recognizes one hundred different nationalities as constituting it, its people are developing a new ethnic consciousness which is not narrowly parochial but gives full value to the Union's Asian and European components.

This development in the Russian Orthodox Church's self-understanding as more than Slavic is very important for us Asians and Africans.

It is in this context that I must presume to speak without expert knowledge about the contributing elements to the Baptism of Russia. Rival claims have been made in this seminar itself by Western Catholics, Byzantine Orthodox, by Bulgarians, Magyars and Armenians.

In principle I would say again first that no nation that is vital, exist authentically without receiving from and giving to others.

I would also say secondly that without a vital core of its own, no nation can authentically give or receive.

I would say thirdly that each mature nation should have the self-assurance to acknowledge with generous gratitude what it has received from others, and at the same time be quite restrained in making claims about what it has given to others.

At the time of the Baptism of Russia the Rus nation lived at the confluence of many cultures. Among these we must mention five at least: First comes the great civilization of Byzantium with Constantinople its capital, and in a sense capital of an orientalized Graeko-Roman international culture, but by no means a universal culture then or now. Byzantine influence

Byzantium was ruled by the Macedonian-Comnenian dynasties at the time of the Baptism of Russia, and had survived the Persian and Arabian conquests of the seventh and eight centuries. Byzantium itself was a composite culture, conserving the rich Hellenistic heritage, but heavily "Orientalized" by elements from Egypt, Nubia, Syria, Arab lands, and even Persian, Akkadian, Sumerian, Assyrian, Babylonian and Phoenician elements among others. We should not make the mistake of thinking of the Byzantine civilization as identical with the Greek civilization. The Byzantine Commonwealth from which Kievan Russia accepted Christianity was by no means a monolithic Greek culture. Time does not permit an adequate treatment of this cosmopolitan aspect of the Byzantine culture from which Russia received much both before and after the Baptism of Russia. Even the Christianity of Byzantium was a glorious integration of the transcendent God of Judaism with the close-to-earth Gods of Hellenism through feelable, touchable, tasteable sacraments and icons and symbols.

About the extent of Byzantine influence on the origin and development of the Russian Church we can say the following:

(1) The Baptism of Vladimir and of Kievan Russia whether it occurred in Kiev or Kherson, was a wholesale adoption of Byzantine Christianity. There may have been other preparatory influences from Magyars, Bulgars, Armenians, Georgians etc., but the main agent was Byzantine Christianity.

(2) Until the Mongolian conquest of 1240, for two and a half centuries of the Russian Church's early formative period, the Russian Church remained an ecclesiastical province of the Byzantine Church. Except for a few exceptions the Metropolitan of Kiev was always a Greek appointed by the Patriarch of Constantinople.

(3) The Metropolitan of Kiev and all Russia, however powerful he may have been, was only a single person. The spirituality of the Church was shaped by the Cave monastery and by monks like St. Anthony and St. Feodosy who were Russians.

(4) The literature and liturgy that shaped the basic structure of the Kievan Church was strictly Byzantine in origin, though these came to Kiev in Slavonic translations made by the Moravian-Bulgarian Slavs.

Western influence

Secondly we must refer briefly to the contribution of Western Christianity and culture. In the first half of the 9th century Charlemagne had brought a new vitality to the Western Church and society led by Franks and Latins. There is no doubt that Kievan princes had close relations with the Western princes. Only one generation after the Baptism of Russia, at the high point of Kievan development, Kievan Prince Yaroslav the Wise (1019-1054) had a Swedish princess as his wife, and three of their sons married European princesses, and three of their daughters married Kings of France, Hungary and Norway. Yaroslav's sister married a Polish King. Another sister married a Byzantine Prince.

The tragedy of the rather unreasonably exorbitant claims made by the Latin Church in relation to the conversion of Russia, to me is that the ethnic, the commercial and political relations of Kievan Russia with Western Europe are not sufficiently highlighted. Instead extrapolations are made backwards from later developments to claim an unwarranted universal jurisdiction of the Pope of Rome over all Christians. Quite obviously Vladimir did receive a delegation of German Catholic bishops and listened to their arguments a good while before his decision to embrace Byzantine Christianity. But also obviously, the Catholic theologians do not seem to have made much of an impression on the Kievans.

We must not forget that the Kievan Prince was a merchant prince. Trade and land were twin bases of the Kievan economy. There was both peaceful trade and robber-trade or tribute-trade when bands of invaders extracted forest products and other commodities from rural people and sent them for sale in Baghdad or Constantinople. This was the largest source of Western influence on Kievan Russia - not the influence of the Latin Church. Very few of the Western fathers were translated into Old Slavonic, while Pseudo-Dionysius, John of Damascus, Ephraem the Syrian, Nicetas of Heracleia, Theodoret, Gregory Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, Basil of Caesaria and others had been translated into Old Slavonic, many of them by Bulgarian-Serbian Slavs, and widely used by Kievan monks. The foundations of Russian spirituality were laid by the two monastic saints of early Russia, St. Anthony (982-1073) and St. Feodosy who died in 1074. They were formed and shaped by the Byzantine and Syrian monastic traditions - not by Western monasticism.

This is not to say that there were no ecclesiastical contacts. We should remember that at the time of the Baptism of Russia the Western schism of 1054 had not taken place. The Greek and Latin churches were in communion with each other. In 959 Princess Olga sent to King Otto I and asked for a Western bishop. Bishop Adalbert from Trier came and spent a year in Kiev, but was unsuccessful in converting the Rus. So were the bishops who were sent by Pope Benedict VII in 977, just 11 years before the Baptism of Russia.

It was not the case that the Rus had no contacts with Latin Christianity in the tenth century. The fact remains, however, that these contacts had no influence in the shaping of Kievan Christianity. In reality whatever contacts there were with the West began to decline after the Baptism of Russia. No lasting or significant influence of Latin Christianity on the Kievans can be documented for the period between the Baptism of Russia and the schism of 1054. After that the relations naturally deteriorated until 1240 when the Mongolian invasions cut off the Western contacts altogether.

The influence of Latin Christianity on the Russian Orthodox Church in its formative period was thus quite minimal.

Southern Slav Influence

Third we must consider the influence of the Southern Slavs (Bulgars, Serbs and Croats) who had been converted more than a century earlier. This is an influence which is difficult to underestimate, but also hard to measure. The Southern Slavs had already translated the Byzantine liturgy into Old Slavonic, and also translated magnificent Patristic and monastic texts, which were received by the Kievans with gratitude. The Rus did not have to learn Greek in order to gain access to the basic texts of Byzantine Christianity. If they had to learn Greek, as the Franks and others had to learn Latin, the Byzantine cultural influence no doubt would have been much greater. The availability of the texts in Slavonic thus helped the development of a distinctive Slavic identity for the Russian Church.

The Moravian Slavic school established by Cyril and Methodius with thousands of students must have had its own influence in the spreading of Eastern Christian literature to the Slavic people of Kievan Russia also, through the medium of graduates of the Moravian school and their disciples.

The Khazar Influence

The fourth influence, often left unrecorded, was the state and culture of the Khazars. The Khazar empire in the 9th century included the territory north of the Black Sea and the Caucasus, between the Carpathians in the West and the Caspian coast to the East. The great city of Itil on the Caspian west coast was a great bulwark in stopping the Arab incursions into Europe. The Khazars had the Volga Bulgars and many South Slavic tribes under their overlordship. Byzantine emperors Justinian II and Constantine V in the first half of the 8th century had each a Khazar wife. As the Pecheneg empire rose and Kievan Russia began to develop in the early tenth century, the Khazar empire declined. Prince Svyatoslaw of Kiev launched a campaign against the Khazars and destroyed the city of Itil in 965 A.D., just 23 years before the Baptism of Russia.

The Khazar Kagan and his boyars had embraced Judaism, but they had in their empire many Slavic tribes, and the mission of Cyril and Methodius had been directed to them before turning to Moravia. Some of these Khazar Slavic tribes may have become Christian, but we cannot document any direct influence of these on Kievan Christianity, though these may have been channels for the spreading of Slavonic Christian literature in Kievan Russia.

The Asia Influence

The fifth influence on Kievan Russia was more cultural than ecclesiastical. The people of Crimea had been profoundly influenced by the rising Arab culture of West Asia. The very paganism of pre-Christian Kiev had received many cultural influences from this West Asian civilization which inherited the culture of the Fertile Crescent, and with which the Kievan Rus maintained intense trade relations. In speaking about these five cultural and religious influences with their varying degrees of impact on Kievan Russia, one must not forget that the Varangian or Kievan Rus were a people with an identity of their own, which received, transformed and integrated these influences. Kievan Russia was not a passive recipient of influences from outside. The case of Kievan identity expressed itself in the distinctiveness of the Russian Orthodox Church from its very inception: when any of these influences became dominant or oppressive,

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Kievan Russia resisted that influence, as for example Yaroslav the Wise (1019-1054) resisted Byzantium by appointing the first Kievan Metropolitan (Hilarion of Kiev), and his twelfth century successor in appointing Clement (from Smolensk) to that post in 1147.

Kievan Christianity was not simply a copy of Byzantine Christianity. It developed its own vitality and spirituality which transformed the musicological, artistic and other elements which it absorbed from Byzantium.

I wish to conclude by expressing my gratitude to God for the life and mission of the Russian Orthodox Church. May it continue to spread life and light to the world until the coming of our Lord.

Gorbachevism Under Fire

Outline for Discussion

1. The survival of General Secretary Gorbachev and his group in power depends on how effectively they can bring (a) economic benefits for the consumer and (b) keep the integrity of the Soviet Union in the face of boisterous, rampant, regional chauvinism.
2. His statement on September 9th is very significant: "I must say that we cannot tolerate violations of state, labour and technological discipline made everywhere, nor can we tolerate disruption of contractual obligations between enterprises, republics, territories, regions". How will that discipline be enforced effectively?
3. Gorbachevism is now under fire from other socialist nations and communist parties, from conservatives who want no major change, from left radicals like Yeltsin who want faster change, and from others on the right who want a complete change to a market economy.
4. Both Cuba and G D R have proscribed soviet publications like Moscow News and Sputnik from their countries. Why?
5. What is the nature and platform of the new opposition called Inter-regional Group of People's Deputies? What is its relation to the C P S U ?
6. What happened in Georgia on April 7 - 9? Who made the decision to use soviet militia under Col-General Rodionov resulting in the death of 18 Georgians? With what consequences?
7. What about the Baltic Republics of LATVIA, ESTONIA and LITHUANIA? Why did the Yakovlev Commission publish the documents connected with the secret Stalin-Hitler agreement signed by Ribbentrop-Molotov (on August 24, 1939) by which the Baltic states were annexed by the Soviet Union? Were they ready for a total break-away of the three republics and their integration into a western political economy? Did the Politburo expect that the three republics would be "finlandized", and accept it as inevitable? (See Moscow News No. 34. August 20, 1989).
8. The protest in Azerbaijan has become very vocal. Azerbaijanis have been restive for some time. The conflict with Armenia on the administration of Nagorno-Karabakh, the Armenian colony inside Azerbaijan sparked off a separatist movement. The central Asian republics are complaining that their oil and minerals bring a huge amount of foreign exchange, but the benefits are more for the R.S.F.S.R. than for the central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kirghizia etc. Behind it is resentment about Russian domination of republics with Asian culture.
9. Baltic states. Sajudis - "Grassroots movement" led by Romaldas Ozolus, versus Lithuanian communist party chief Algirdas Brazauskas. The Lithuanian Communist Party anxious to keep control of Lithuania when it becomes semi-independent. 24th August 1989, Gorbachov phones Brazauskas twice to stop "Break-away nationalist hysteria", after a strong CPSU statement on 23rd against separatism. On Aug 25th Lithuanian and Estonian C.P. chiefs met. Statement by Estonian Ideology Chief MIKK Tiitma attacking CPSU statement, as originating with Kremlin Conservatives

who want a "strong hand" to defeat Prestroika. Latvian C.P. Ideology chief Ivars Kezberis denounces CPSU statement on Television "as provocative and and an interference in our international affairs".

10. Estonia-Regional Autonomy July 24-27 - 13,000 workers in 21 factories in Estonia, mostly Russians, Ukrainians, Poles - strike against 5 year residency requirement rule in Estonian draft election law. These workers come for a couple of years to work and go away to be replaced by others. Economic loss - 2 million roubles. Ultimate result - a new demand for autonomy for Northern Estonia, called Shalchinin, dominated by Poles. Mass meeting on Sept. 7th against the "diktat of the Sajudis". Divisions in the "Liberation movements" of the Baltic states will at least delay the process of their separation.
11. The Language Issue. Though Lenin set forth a solution for the "Nationalities Problem", it is far from solved. Language has in many places become the issue. In most parts of the Soviet Union Russian is required as the first language, and the local language is given only secondary status. The demand now in many republics is to make the local language the first language mandatory even for officials from other parts of the country for short appointments. In the Baltic states, in Moldavia, in Ukraine and in the Southern and Central Asian republics it is the same problem. In Ukraine state leaders have circulated proposal to make Ukrainian official language.
12. Gorbachev gets fire from both Ligachev to his right and Yeltsin to his left. He is just back from his Crimean holiday and has issued a statement on Saturday, September 9, announcing a programme of exceptional measures to restore the health of the economy, concerning above all, supplies - (to be approved by Congress of Peoples' Deputies), and not to tolerate certain violent forms of dissent.
13. Party Central Committee meets on September 20th. The Congress of Peoples' Deputies meet in September - before that. People will watch on TV. This is the icon of Glasnost But.....
in some Central Asian republics the election was held under curfew and they are demanding that these candidates be unseated. Certainly there was no serious discussion in the Congress or in Supreme Soviet, as to why Khosraschoi and the Law on Enterprises has failed to produce results, why co-operatives have become exploiters, why the sudden upsurge of regional conflict, on what should be done to avert catastrophe and to make the economy move; on how the Party's power should be controlled by proper checks and balances; why the democratisation of the Party is not possible because of the danger of regional break-aways within the Party itself; why the Bureacracy of 18 million people cannot be cut down to size without central planning for job creation and retraining of personnel; why the conversion from military to civil production is still slow; how the various national liberation movements within the U S S R are to be faced; on the ideological foundations and justifications for economic reform.

Gorbachevism under Fire

PAUL GREGORIOS

UNFLAPPABILITY is the better part of valor, especially for a head of government. But some senior statesmen are more adept at dissimulation than others. Mikhail Gorbachev, being more honest than the ordinary run of statesmen, sometimes visibly flaps.

Anyone watching on TV his chairing of the concluding session of the Supreme Soviet in August could see the visible signs of irritation on his face. He did not look with favour on the formation of the Inter-regional Group of People's Deputies in Moscow Cinema Theatre on July 29 and 30. Gorbachev did not mention Yeltsin by name. He rather mentioned with visible irritation Gavriil Popov who actually chaired the founding assembly of the opposition group. Everybody knew, however, that Yeltsin was the major force in forming an organised anti-Gorbachev group.

In fact, however, things are not that simple. Of course it was Boris Yeltsin who officially announced the formation of the *Mezhhregionalnaya Grupp* in the Supreme Soviet on July 31. But they chose to have five co-chairmen rather than Yeltsin as sole chairman. The others are of varying ilk, Academician Andrei Sakharov, the classical icon of Soviet liberal dissent; Gavriil Popov; Yuri Afanassief and Viktor Palm, the last mentioned representing the Baltic republics. Their common platform, however, is more than opposition to Gorbachev, more than mere Yeltsinism.

Sergei Borisovich Stankevich, one of the bright young deputies in the opposition described that platform to me as (a) Speedier Democratisation, (b) More efficient economic reconstruction; (c) An effective, just, mixed market-oriented economy; (d) Self-government by people without bureaucratic administration; (e) Preserving Nature; and (f) Non-violent resolution of all inter-regional conflicts

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based on humane compromise. This platform had been published before the founding meeting which was attended on the first day by 393 Deputies, though only 260 had signed up as members constituting the opposition.

The opposition also publishes a weekly newspaper, the *Narodnik Deputat*. They sought no government permission to publish the newspaper (first issue 100,000 copies at 29 kopeks a copy). They thought that government clearance was unnecessary, since they are People's-Deputies, after all, and acknowledged no authority above them.

Many of the Deputies (41.7 per cent) wanted only an open discussion club, and the discussion to form a distinct organised group was taken with only a 55.4 per cent majority vote. They are independently financed by voluntary contributions into an account at the USSR Zhilsotsbank. Stankevich told me that the State had tried to close this account, but failed. Money is pouring in, at least in the early stage. The Group's slogan is *Vlasti-Narodu* or Power to the People.

Dr. Stankevich (Ph. D. 1983, thesis, *US Politics during Nixon Administration*), 35 years old, Researcher at the Institute of World History, impressed me with his ability, integrity and wide reading. He has become an idol of the young people in the cities. Most of the opposition is drawn from Moscow and Leningrad. At least 70 per cent of its members are also members of CPSU, including Stankevich. This is natural since 83 per cent of the 2250 Deputies are CPSU members.

As many have rightly observed, there is an anomaly in some members of the ruling party joining together to form an opposition in Parliament. Stankevich told me that there are other opposition groups under formation. I did not get the impression that there is any substantial ideological agreement among the members of the group. They are certainly not all Yeltsinites. One senior member, an Academician, gave me the impression that he was more of a social democrat than a communist.

I do think that the emergence of this opposition group should be one of the least of Gorbachev's headaches. In fact it is eloquent testimony both to the reality of *glasnost* in the Soviet Union, and to

the lack of much constructive thinking anywhere on the horizon in that great land. At the end of Gorbachev's closing address in the Supreme Soviet, there were opposition deputies who defiantly refused to applaud the speech, and sat with their arms folded — a sure sign, though not a very refined one, of the new democratic freedom.

IN my wide-ranging series of contacts quite a formidable catalogue of complaints emerged. Here is a sample list:

1. *Perestroika* has not produced any positive results for the ordinary consumer. Prices have gone up, quality of goods in the market has gone down; there are not enough goods on the shelves.
2. Cost Accounting or *Khosraschost* for the State Enterprises has not worked, because there has been insufficient over-all planning to ensure alternate employment for surplus labour in the padded workforce of all enterprises or to ensure supply of equipment and raw materials for the factories.
3. Co-operatives have turned out to be largely mere capitalist extortioners, producing low-quality goods at higher prices, making a few rich at the expense of the public, but not contributing much to production increase.
4. The failure is not on the part of the Soviet people, but due to the continuing persistence of the old vertical command system and its apparatus — that is, the 18 million strong Party and State Bureaucracy, riddled with apathy, inefficiency and corruption.
5. Gorbachevism is largely at the top. Only a small part (perhaps only one per cent) of the 280 million Soviet people has learned to cast off the habits of indifference to public needs, false courtesy or hypocrisy, and slavish, unquestioning obedience to higher authority, ingrained through two generations or more of the command system.
6. The privileges and prerogatives of the Party and State elite have not yet been taken away. While ordinary people stand in long queues for bread and milk, the elite continue to enjoy special supply shops, special medical facilities, automobiles, dachas and so on.
7. The new Congress of People's Deputies and the Supreme Soviet have done well to perform in front of the TV cameras, giving the people an opportunity to watch their representatives in action; but what they discussed were merely petty complaints and easy recriminations against erring apparatchiks, not any constructive solutions to the Soviet Union's big problems like Inter-regional tensions and economic stagnation.
8. The present leadership is doing nothing to prevent the disintegration of the socialist system: Comecon nations like Poland opting out of the socialist fold, Soviet republics opting to break away from the Soviet Union.
9. There are still 3.7 million men in arms — low paid, living under inhuman conditions, uselessly consuming a huge portion of the Union budget; too many Generals than needed; and

yet Rust landed in the Red Square without anyone stopping him; so many Soviet nuclear submarines have recently collapsed or got into trouble; a runaway pilotless Soviet Mig-23 plane took off and crashed in Belgium. The whole military set-up needs total overhauling and drastic reduction.

10. Miners strike because their working conditions are incredibly squalid; because they cannot get subsistence provisions for their family needs; their health is not being looked after; sanitation is bad. Trade Unions are on the management side and care nothing for the workers. The All-Union AUCCTU is part of the government, not run by the workers.

Well, that is only a sample list, and looks fairly formidable. Add to it complaints about rampant bribery and corruption, about an uncontrolled criminal mafia in cahoots with some political forces, an inflation rate reportedly worse than that in China, continuing repression by Party officials in remote areas, and you have enough to grumble about.

FROM many sources, both conservative and progressive, one heard the call for "a strong hand". One leading political commentator told me that Gorbachev was too soft, as were some in his team like Prime Minister Ryzkov. His view was that this team could not hold the nation together and that some of the top people waiting in the hinterground will have to come forward and take over the reins of power. I did not hear the argument that Ligachov, for example, could do that. Nobody I talked to thought Yeltsin could do it either. Some would back an experienced career diplomat like Yakovlev.

It would be unrealistic to expect a repressive regime emerging soon in the Soviet Union, despite the widespread clamour for a strong hand. The democratic process has taken root in Soviet society and it will be difficult to totally reverse that process. A Stalinist type of regime is for the present at least unthinkable. There is no one group emerging who is a likely candidate for supreme power. The Inter-regional Group has no such possibility, being too diverse and too loosely organised, and with very limited public support, especially outside the large cities.

To me at least, the only feasible line is the Gorbachev line with some major changes, especially in the economic realm and in the area of the integrity of the Soviet Union. I have no doubt that the present leadership is resigned to what seems like an inescapable development — the falling away of the East European socialist complex, and the emergence of a new European Community which is not rabidly anti-Soviet and which would have a strong socialist orientation. I get the impression that despite words to the contrary, the leadership has reluctantly come to the thought that the Baltic republics would also go, and the most they could expect from these republics is some sort of Finlandisation, that is, free commerce with the West without anti-Sovietism, even often supporting Soviet foreign policy. They

cannot accept the possibility of the secession of the southern republics like Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan. But once the Baltic Republics and the Comecon states begin their odyssey towards an European Community, can Armenia and Georgia be stopped? Will not the predominantly Islamic republics of Central Asia demand their own freedom of action and alliance, conceivably with the growingly powerful Pan-Islamic movement?

In the minds of many of my interlocutors, questions like these could be settled only by a strong and flexible leadership — not the old style reactionary undemocratic leadership of the Stalinist or Trot-

skyite type — but one that is both wise and able to exercise power ruthlessly where needed.

Gorbachevism is under fire. It is not so much *perestroika* and glasnost that people oppose, but the impression of weakness in the face of regional and Comecon break-away processes, and the very poor implementation of economic reforms in both the state enterprise sector and the so-called co-operative sector. I was told by a well-informed person that there was an attempt to oust Gorbachev from power — a move within the Party itself — as recently as July. Obviously Gorbachev has survived many such attempts. □

Impending crisis in the Soviet Union?

Gorbachevism Under Fire

(Paul Gregorios)

A Statesman, in order to survive, has to be unflappable, especially in the face of crisis and opposition. Our Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi, once told the Diamond Jubilee session of the Indian Philosophical Congress (~~198~~ Hyderabad, 1985) that that was ~~one~~ one of the two main values he had learned from a study of the Gita; ^{the two being} ~~namely~~ nishkāma karma (action without desire for its fruit) and sthita-prajñata ("equanimity is the better part of valour").

In the Soviet Union, such unperturbability in the face of crisis ~~is already~~ seems difficult to achieve, even for an obviously strong man like President Mikhail Gorbachev. The dimensions of the crisis are indeed manifold: regionalism threatening to balkanize the Soviet Union; the falling away of Poland from the Communist family and the likelihood of other ^{Eastern European} nations following; the failure of economic reform to bring tangible results, at least from the Consumer's point of view; the formation of the Inter-regional Group of People's Deputies

as an opposition ~~for~~ group within the Congress of Deputies; serious criticism by other Communist nations like Cuba and GDR; Several unpublicized ~~attempts~~ ^{also} ~~for~~ (thus far, failed) attempts ^{on the part of Party stalwarts} to oust Gorbachev from the seat of power; the ^{and operation} rise of a criminal mafia network throughout the Soviet Union; the ~~of~~ unmasking of large-scale, pervasive bribery and corruption within the bureaucracy; the emergence of a huge black market of untaxed and illegitimate income; ~~the~~ greater shortage of essential consumer goods in the market; co-operatives gone haywire in profiteering; the sudden plummeting of Gorbachev's ^{personal} popularity within the Soviet Union (abroad it ~~is~~ ^{seems} still very high); the open accusation that Gorbachev is not strong enough to hold the Soviet Union together.

Will Gorbachev survive? Should he? The question is being widely and openly discussed among thinking people in the Soviet Union. During my month-long (July 11 to August 10) visit to the Soviet Union,

I had occasion to talk ^{with} to a wide range of people, including two members of the "Opposition Group" which was formed while I was in the Soviet Union; ~~and~~ ^{two ministers of government,} several high ranking Academicians, People's Deputies, Social Scientists, journalists, young intellectuals, ~~and~~ leaders of co-operatives, and even two priests of the "underground church" dissenting and dissociating themselves from the official Russian Orthodox Church, ^{on} the ground that it is too much identified with the State.

There is no easy answer to the questions: Will Gorbachev survive? Should he?

A well-known senior political Commentator told me openly that Gorbachevism prevails only at the top, and has not come down to the people. True, Gorbachev has immense popular support; but few understand his global humanistic outlook within which perestroika-glasnost has to function.

The Same Commentator told me that leadership at the top is too weak to handle effectively a situation such as prevails in the Soviet Union today. Both President Gorbachev and Prime Minister ~~Rezhet~~ (Chairman of the Council of

Ministers is his real title. Ryzhkov are good men, with the best intentions, but not strong enough to lead in a crisis such as the present, according to him.

He also said that there were strong men in the top power-team; Yakovlev is strong, experienced, and by no means conservative. He shows his hand on rare occasions, like the making public of the Hitler-Stalin Correspondence and the Molotov-Ribbentrop agreement on the Baltic states. Yakovlev seems to be kept "in reserve", and may come to the fore when a strong hand is needed.

It took a lot of guts to take responsibility to publish those documents, knowing that the secession of three Baltic states (Lithuania, Estonia and Latvia) is the inevitable outcome of such publication.

A catalogue of complaints

Quite a catalogue of complaints
derived from my conversations. Some
examples:

1. The 18 million strong bureaucracy is ^{the} main problem. It is riddled with apathy, inefficiency and corruption.
2. Of the 280 million Soviet people only a small percent ^(perhaps 1 percent) has as yet ~~emerged out of~~ ^{cast off} the ^{habits of} indifference, to seeds, false courtesy and slavish obedience ingrained for two generations or more.
3. Perestroika has not yet produced any tangible economic results and shows no signs of doing so in the immediate future.
4. Cost-Accounting or ^{KHOSRASCHOST} Khosraschost for state enterprises has not worked, due to lack of over-all planning for the easy availability of raw materials and technical equipment, as well as for absorption and

training for alternate employment for the surplus labour in each enterprise.

5. Cooperatives have largely turned out to be mere Capitalist extortioners, bandits rather than benefactors.
6. The privileges and prerogatives of the elite have not yet been taken away. The Party elite and bureaucratic leaders can get supplies easily, have choice medical facilities, enjoy dachas and automobiles, while the people starve for bread and milk.
7. The new Congress of Deputies and the Supreme Soviet have done well to televise their performance and expose it to the general public; but what they discussed were ~~the~~ petty complaints and easy recriminations against ^{apparatchiks} ~~officials~~, not any constructive solutions to the Soviet Union's problems like regionalism and economic stagnation.

The present leadership is doing nothing to check the process of dissipation of socialism: Comecon nations opting out of the socialist fold, Soviet republics opting to break away from the Soviet Union.

There are still 3.7 million service-men in arms - low paid, living under inhuman conditions, uselessly consuming a huge portion of the Union's budget; too many generals; and yet Rust landed in Red Square without anyone stopping him; so many Soviet submarines have collapsed or got into trouble; a run-away, pilot-less Mig-23 plane crashed in Belgium.

Miners strike because their working conditions are squalid, they cannot get provisions for family needs, their health is not being looked after. Trade Unions are on the management side and not with the workers. The All-Union AUCCTU is part of government, " " the workers.

Struggle against the Establishment

Gorbachev finds himself involved in a titanic power struggle. Of course he remains both President and General Secretary of the Party. He has radically changed Party leadership. Still control of the Party seems out of reach.

People now ~~speak~~ openly ^{criticize} ~~about~~ the nomenklatura, the apparatus, the power structure that holds together the nation. The transition from Party power to people's power is the issue. Some of that ^{democratic} transition has come through in the election to the Congress of Peoples' Deputies, ^(July 89) and in the meeting of the Supreme Soviet ~~just concluded~~ in July-August 1989.

The anti-party feeling is strongest in Moscow and also in other large cities. The major portion of the organized working class (the Trade Unions) are pro-Party, almost anti-reform. ^{Some workers} They did go on strike, but that was mainly on grounds of outrageous living and working conditions. ~~But~~ It came at a time when circumstances point to the hand of some Party functionaries in creating an atmosphere of destabilisation.

miners'

The strikers ~~are~~ seem certainly to be protests against the "strong hand" of the Mining Minister. After several demands for humane living conditions, ~~the~~ were refused, the miners had to strike. But ~~that was~~ ^{strike in a}

Abkhaz

is an unusual measure, abandoned by the trade unions virtually since 1917. ^{These strikes} must have ^{had} some ~~Party~~ backing. The All-Union Coordinating Committee on Trade Unions did not support the strikers. As Teimuraz Avaliani, chairman of the Strike Committee ~~at~~ from Kemerevo put it, "In our country the AUCCTU is an organ of state power...; for us ~~(it)~~ miners, (it ~~is~~ is) another high echelon giving out orders." The Miners had made ~~what~~ their representations to AUCCTU already in December 1988. The strike was virtually against the Trade Union movement itself, which has ^{become} bureaucratic, uncreative, and unresponsive to the ^{real} needs of workers.

Perestroika - Glasnost - A closer look

The Soviet Union's Mounting Problems

(Paulos Mar Gregorios)

Gorbachev's popularity remains high in the west. Not quite so, however, within the Soviet Union.

USSR The fact that an Inter-regional Group of Peoples' Deputies has been formed in the Congress of People's Deputies itself seems only part of the story. Gorbachev is visibly (on television) irritated when he refers to the group and to Gavriil Popov who chaired the ^{opening} meeting ^{of the group} in the Moscow Cinema ~~theatre~~ House on June 29th and 30th. There were 393 (out of a total of 2200) ~~present~~ ^{at the opening session} Deputies (equivalent of our M.P.) present, but only 260 had registered ahead wanting to form the group.

Boris Yeltsin, the ousted Moscow Party chief, was the main force behind the opposition, many thought. As it turned out the majority in that Cinema House meeting refused to have Yeltsin as sole chairman as he himself and his followers seem to have wanted. The meeting chose instead to have 5 co-chairmen with no one having precedence among them. Besides Yeltsin and Popov, the three other chairmen are Academician Sakharov (Nobel Prize Physicist), Yuri Afanasiyev and Viktor Palm - the last from the Baltic republics. Some 70% of the opposition are CPSU members. That

is quite understandable since 83% of the ^{2200 elected} People's Deputies are Party members. But now we have the first instance of an ^{organized} ~~Party~~ ^{Party Group} opposition within a Socialist Parliament, the majority of whose members are also members of the ~~Ruling~~ Party!

A word about the Group later. The point here is that this Group is a major head-ache for Gorbachev, the Party General Secretary. But his worse problem is that Perestroika has not produced tangible results for the ordinary consumer. The two major economic reforms were first the Law on State Enterprises (Khosraschot or Best Accountability) and the Law on Cooperatives (granting people the right to form themselves into manufacturing and sales Co-operatives in certain specific economic areas).

State enterprises are still badly run - obsolete machinery, poor quality production, ~~padding~~ ^{padding} labour force, and still ~~red tape only~~ ^{not more than} a few inches shorter than before. ~~But~~ Excess workers have been put into other outfits, but these outfits themselves do not have sufficient equipment or means of production. Economic Reform has become a joke. Especially in cities like Moscow, consumer goods are scarcer than before. Shops have too many empty shelves. Over-all production seems to have decreased

rather than increased as a result of perestroika

Co-operatives on the other hand have become not just the butt of ridicule and derision, but in fact objects of hatred. You ask Moscow people whether the Co-operatives are Benefactors or bandits. Most people will give the second answer. They hate Co-operatives as Capitalist scum, extortioners and exploiters. On this more later.

Regional Revolts

Among Gorbachev's major headaches, inter-regional conflicts and regional revolts are at the top. There are two different sets of regional revolts - those in the western Baltic republics of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia; the other in southern republics - Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kirghiz and Uzbekistan. In

In the Baltic republics, the European white population generally feels ~~etc~~ racially superior to the Slavs. In more recent times the racism involved comes out more openly. Political leaders speak out brazenly about their ethnic superiority to the ruling Russians, and want to be independent of Russian control which they see in the Soviet system. They feel that they can make greater scientific-technological and economic-cultural advancement if they are freed from subordination to the Russians. Their cultural and spiritual affinities are

with the white non-Slavic peoples of Europe, though the distinction between westerners and slaves ~~does~~ has been significantly lowered in the Baltic republics for generations by miscegenation between slaves and westerners. It was a surprise then that the first meeting of the Supreme Soviet in July-August endorsed their demand formally in a decision to grant the Baltic republics ^{economic} ~~self~~ autonomy (khosraschest), though the detailed law will have to wait till the next meeting of the Supreme Soviet in the autumn of this year.

Yuri Kraft, an Estonian People's Deputy, ~~argues~~ in Moscow News (Weekly) (No 32/89) even justifies the Estonian demand that non-Estonians can have votes in their republic only after a two-year residence there.

It is clear that the Baltic republics will continue to demand cultural and economic independence. If it ~~is~~ is granted to them by the Soviet Union, would not other republics also make the same demand? What does that do to the unity and integrity of the Soviet Union?

In the southern republics the situation is different. Georgians and Armenians may feel technologically superior to the Russians, though the basis for this in fact is doubtful. These are both traditionally Christian republics

and their Christianity is at least six or seven centuries older than that of the Russians and not received from the Slavs. But these traditionally Christian republics and the traditionally Islamic republics of Central Asia feel strong resentment against Russian domination.

The Soviet Union claimed in the past to have solved the nationalities problem. This was often put forward as an achievement of Lenin himself. Today the regional problems (same as what the Soviets call the nationalities problem) in the USSR seem much worse than those in India.

Gorbachev is not totally in control, or even genuinely confident that he can successfully solve this problem. Some think that the leadership is resigned to the inescapable fact that the Baltic republics will break away; and ~~then~~ only many hope that this will not happen to the Southern and Central Asian republics as well.

THE FLAME OF FAITH IS NOT PUT OUT!

Reflections in the Soviet Union

(Paul Verghese)

This was my fifth visit to the Soviet Union. So there was not much that was new or strange. Yet one could notice certain differences.

The most obvious were the skyscrapers and the gay shop windows. Moscow's Kalininsky Prospect is lined with an array of new glass and steel, twentyfive story buildings, most of which have spacious, well stocked and well displayed shops on the first floor. Tall, modern, residential buildings have risen in Moscow, Leningrad, Samarkand, Tashkent, and many other cities. Obviously the supply of consumer goods as well as the purchasing power of the people has gone up considerably.

As Kosygin proudly announced on April 6th in the 24th congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, retail trade in the country hit a new high of 153.6 billion rubles in 1970, an increase of 48.4 percent over 1965. He continued: "However, growth in the output of some products has lagged behind the rising cash incomes of the population. We still have some difficulties in meeting the demand of the population for some lines of goods, in particular, meat and meat products, although during the eighth five-year period (1966-70) their annual consumption per head has increased by an average of seven kilograms for the country". During this period 11,350,000 new apartments have been constructed, though there is still serious housing shortage. Television sets, refrigerators and washing machines are now in more plentiful supply, though the shortages continue.

Education has also made considerable progress. 75% of the working people in the towns and over 50% in the rural areas have now a secondary or university education.

The working week is now 5 days. Industrial output has increased by 50% over the five years, and reached 373 billion rubles (a ruble is a little more than a U.S. dollar at the official rate) in 1970. National income has doubled in ~~19~~ 20 years (it took 20 years in the U.S.A.), while Industrial output has doubled in 8.5 years (18 in the U.S.A.)

I watched Brezhnev's closing address on television from my hotel room in Tskov on April 9th. What impressed me most was the calm sense of controlled power, the absence of empty rhetoric, and a confident optimism about the future. There can be no doubt - Brezhnev is on top. Kosygin runs a close second, Podgorny presides without power, and Suslov is on the way up. Brezhnev controls policy, Kosygin seems to be in charge of domestic production and economic affairs.

Brezhnev's opening speech on March 30th made an extended reference to China. "In the last eighteen months, as a result of the initiative displayed on our part, there have been signs of some normalization in our relations." He continued that negotiations on border disputes with China "are going forward slowly and it goes without saying that their favourable completion calls for a constructive attitude not only of one side". Trade with China is growing, said Brezhnev, but China's anti-Soviet policy and propaganda continues, and is written into the decisions of the ninth congress of the Chinese Communist Party. Strong but controlled words concluded the reference to China: "We resolutely reject the slanderous inventions concerning the policy of our Party and our State which are being spread from Peking and instilled into the minds of the Chinese people".

On Czechoslovakia, Brezhnev justified Warsaw pact action as directed against "the various residual internal anti-socialist forces" which tried "to become active and even mount direct counter-revolutionary action in the hope of support from outside, from imperialism". He claimed that Czech uprising was directed against the position of Socialist Europe as a whole and had to be effectively and resolutely dealt with.

It was an accident that my lectures at the theological academies of the Russian Orthodox Church coincided with the dates of the Party congress. Church people were generally reticent about the whole show, and refused to be drawn into a conversation about it. Did the Party congress indicate a change of attitude towards religion and the churches? No. Has state or party harassment of the churches increased or decreased in recent years? There were certain unauthorized actions against local parishes on the initiative of local communist parties, but when these were brought to the notice of the authorities they were promptly corrected. How many orthodox churches are open in Moscow? Forty. In Leningrad? Fourteen, including the Academy chapel. How many orthodox parish churches in the whole country? about 30,000. Are the Baptist and Lutheran churches specially harassed? Not specially. Is anti-religious propaganda stronger than before? It was at a level of caricature before; now there is more serious research about the life of the churches undertaken by trained sociologists.

Discretion demanded that I better not ask too many questions. So let me now note down some of my own observations about the life of the Russian orthodox church.

I lectured in the two academies of the Russian Orthodox Church - Zagorsk (near Moscow) and Leningrad. These are supposed to be advanced theological institutions, where the students who have already spent six years in Seminary continue their studies for four years. I had to lecture through an interpreter; so I am not sure how much of what I said really got through. I had the impression that the students were interested, though especially in Leningrad I found three or four students who seemed to regard my lectures as a total bore. Students were shy about asking questions, nor did they seem to want to contradict me - out of sheer politeness. The lectures were on Christology and contemporary theological trends. They were weakest in following contemporary lines of western theological thought - both Catholic and Protestant.

I wondered whether all these three hundred and fifty students in the two academies, and the more than five hundred who take their courses by correspondence from Zagorsk had a real vocation for the ministry of the Church. I suspect that some at least are attached by the not too bad financial prospects. A bishop gets about 500 rubles and that is not much less than the salary of a cabinet minister. The Church is rich and pays its servants well. The believers give a lot of money, and the only ways to spend it are salaries, restoration of buildings and vestments, and foreign guests. No opportunity is given to the Church to do any Social Service or to run any institutions.

But many students in Seminary and academy gave the impression they had a real vocation to save the church. Ten years is a long period of training, especially if youngsters have to be separated from the normal life of their age in Soviet schools with rigorous anti-religious propaganda and Komsomol (Communist Youth league) training. The intellectual life in the academies struck me as being inadequate to cope with the problems of contemporary society. Theological books in English, French and German are becoming increasingly available in the academy libraries, but most students do not have access to anything but books in the Russian language, most of

which date from before 1917.

The church will go on in Russia, but it would be unrealistic to anticipate in the near future any intellectual contribution commensurate with the historical richness of the Russian theological tradition.

I visited some churches and monasteries. The ardent devotion of the believers is hard to describe convincingly. Without any formal training or instruction in religion or faith, these millions of believers witness to a type of faith which is far from intellectual, but not necessarily worse for that reason. It makes them trust in God with a total commitment, it helps them to pray with groanings of the spirit which need no syllabic utterance. It transforms them deeply from within and enables them to face life with more confidence.

Take the city of Leningrad - 5 million people, the size of Chicago. Fourteen churches open does not seem too much for that large a city. But look at the numbers. St. Nicholas Cathedral has two floors, upstairs holding about 5000 and downstairs about 4000. And every Sunday there are two liturgies, and for both the church is packed full, with lots of people standing outside. St. Vladimir's holds about 5000, and there too, people were standing outside the church for want of room inside. The Cathedral of the Transfiguration holds about 3,000, and the Trinity Cathedral, largest of all about 10,000. If all these 14 churches are more than packed full every Sunday morning, then the church-going crowd must be quite considerable. The academy chapel is perhaps the smallest, with standing room only for about 500. But the crowd there is so great every Sunday that the authorities may interfere any day for sheer personal safety reasons. They expected such a huge crowd for Easter, that they had to issue admission tickets to the regular Sunday visitors. This year the academy chapel issued 1300 cards for the Easter Service.

On Easter night St. Nicholas Cathedral is so crowded that they fill not only both floors, but also the extensive church compound, and still out into the neighboring streets in their thousands that all traffic comes to a stand-still every year for the past two or three years.

It is this flame of faith in the life of the laity, burning even without the oil of teaching or training, that makes the Russian Church indestructable even for the most vicious anti-religious propaganda.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

THE STATUS AND CONDITION OF RELIGIOUS GROUPS

IN THE U.S.S.R.

(DR. PAULOS MAR GREGORIOS, METROPOLITAN
OF DELHI AND THE NORTH)

I have often been asked the following questions, I seek to answer them to the best of my knowledge and information. Representatives of the Soviet Government or of religious groups from the Soviet Union may not agree with everything I say.

Q.1. Is there freedom for religious practice in the Soviet Union?

Answer: Article 52 of the Constitution (Fundamental Law) of the USSR lays down the law as follows:

"Citizens of the USSR are guaranteed freedom of conscience, that is, the right to profess or not to profess any religion, and to conduct religious worship or atheistic propaganda. Incitement of hostility or hatred on religious grounds is prohibited."

"In the USSR, the church is separated from the State, and the school from the church."

The right to profess any religion and to conduct religious worship is thus guaranteed by the Constitution, and implemented in actual practice.

Q.2. Which are the main religious groups in the Soviet Union?

Answer: There are no official statistics on this matter since the Soviet Census forms do not ask citizens to declare their religious affiliation or lack of it. The main religious bodies are

- a) Orthodox, Protestant and Roman Catholic Christians,
- b) Shiite, Sunni or Ismaili Muslims
- c) Buddhists
- d) Jews

Q.3. Where do the Buddhists live?

Answer: Mostly in the Buryat Autonomous Republic in the far east of the Soviet Union, around Lake Baikal. The Buddhist Association of the USSR has its headquarters in the newly re-built Monastery, in Ivolga, near Ulan Ude capital of Buryat. There are Buddhists in the Kalmyk and Tuva Autonomous Republics and in the Chita and Irkhutsk regions.

Q.4. How many Buddhists are there in the Soviet Union?

Answer: A modest estimate is half a million. There may be more, perhaps 800,000.

Q.5. Are there Buddhist viharas and monasteries(lamaseries) in the Soviet Union?

Answer: Yes, there are several. A new Buddhist temple has been recently built in the Ivolginsky lamasera which serves as the headquarters for Soviet Buddhists and where the Hamba Lamo lives. Indian Buddhists have visited several of these monasteries and have written about them in the Maha Bodhi.

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Q.6. What is your estimate of the total number of Muslims in the Soviet Union? Where are they?

Answer: An informed estimate is 30 million Muslims in the Soviet Union. The historically Islamic areas are in Central Asia, Uzbekistan, Kazakstan, Tajikstan, Azerbaijan, Kirghizia, Turkmenia, Tataria, Bashkiria, Kabardino-Balkaria, Daghestan, Checheno-Ingushetia, and Karachai-Circassia. There are functioning mosques in all these area. In addition, there are large numbers of Muslims living in all Soviet cities. Impressive mosques are functioning in Moscow, Leningrad, Ulyanovsk, Rostov-on-the-Don, Gorki and Kuibshev. There are mosques in Armenia and Georgia also, as well as in the Mordovian, Udmurt and Chuvash autonomous republics.

Q.7. How are the mosques and their Imams supported? Do they get their salaries from the Government?

Answer: The mosques and their staff are supported entirely by the voluntary contributions of Muslim worshippers. The annual collections are sufficient not only for the budgets of the mosques, but also for the central staff, for publications and other expenses like training the clergy.

Q.8. Which are the institutions other than mosques?

Answer: There are four central boards:

- 1) Central Asia and Kazakhstan. HQ. Tashkent (Uzbekistan)
- 2) Europeans USSR and Siberia. HQ. Ufa (Bashkir)
- 3) Northern Caucasus. HQ. Buinaksk (Daghestan)
- 4) Transcaucasia HQ. Baku (Azerbaijan)

These boards have administrative responsibilities over mosques and other institutions in their area. They also take care of the repair and maintenance of mosques and the construction of mosques. They organise forums on international issues and invite Muslims from other countries. Eight such international gatherings have recently been held. They organise visits of Muslim leaders abroad, and take care of the dozens of visiting Islamic teams which come to the USSR every year.

Q.9. Where do the Muslims train their leadership?

Answer: There are two major institutions for training Muslim leadership. They are the Mir-Arab Madrasah of Bukhara and the Tashkent Higher Muslim School. The Mir-Arab admits students with a secondary school (secular) education and through a competitive entrance examination system and gives them a seven year training in Quran reading, Tafsir (interpretation of the Quran), the Hadith, the Shariat, Islamic History and Arabic, as

language and literature. Graduates may be sent abroad for further study at Islamic universities like Al-Azhar in Cairo, El-Beida in Libya or universities with Islamic departments in Morocco, Amman or Damascus. Sheikh Abdulghani Abdullaev is a graduate of both Tashkent and Al-Azhar and now teaches in the Tashkent Higher Muslim School.

Q.10. Do Soviet Muslims publish any journals? Can they get the Quran and other Islamic religious books?

Answer:Yes. Sheikh Abdulghani Abdullaev is also the Editor-in-Chief of the Magazine Muslims of the Soviet East which is now published in five languages: Uzbek, Arabic, Persian, English and French. It is distributed widely within the USSR and also in some 70 countries abroad. Six editions of the Quran has been published recently, mostly under the auspices of the Muslim Religious Board of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. The Hadith or the teachings of the great Ulemas of the past are also printed and distributed.

Q.11. Are Soviet Muslims free to make the pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina?

Answer:Yes. Every year pilgrims of all Soviet nationalities gather together and fly to Saudi Arabia, given a festive send-off by their fellow Muslims. They are also received festively on their return.

Q.12. What about pilgrimages within the country?

Answer:There are several monuments and historical holy places in Soviet Central Asia which attract pilgrims from within the country as well as from abroad. For example, the Kussam ibn Abbas' mausoleum, built in the 11th century, houses the tomb of Kussam, cousin of Prophet Muhammad, and one of the first disseminators of Islam in Central Asia. Several mausoleums of Muslim saints were added to the tomb in later centuries, and today the ensemble Shah-i-Zinda is an impressive tribute to Islamic history and architecture. The city of Samarkhand is worth visiting, if only to see the Shah-i-Zinda ensemble. There are many other centres of pilgrimage in Central Asia and many pilgrims go there every year.

Q.13. Which are the main Christian Churches in the Soviet Union?

Answer:The following list is not exhaustive, but covers the most important groups.

- 1)The Russian Orthodox Church, by far the largest, HQ Moscow.
- 2)The Armenin Apostolic Church HQ Etchmiadzin, Soviet Armenia.
- 3)The Georgian Orthodox Church HQ Dbilisi(Tiflis) Soviet Georgia.
- 4)The Union of Evangelical Christians - Baptists HQ Moscow.
- 5)The Roman Catholic Church, in Lithuania, Latvia etc.
- 6)The Lutheran Church (Augsburg Confession) in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

- 7)The Reformed Church in Lithuania and Transcarpathia.
- 8)The Old Believers, Popovtsi (with ordained orthodox priests)
- 9)The Old Believers Beglopovovtsi (run-away priests)
- 10)The Old Believers Bespopovtsi (without ordained priests)
- 11)Jews. (in major cities, in Georgia, Central Asia etc)
- 12)Seventh Day Adventists.
- 13)Jehova's Witnesses.

Q.14. How many churches are open and functioning in the Soviet Union?

Answer:The official government figure is 20,000 places of worship of all religious groups together, now open and functioning:

"In the USSR there are more than 20,000 functioning Russian Orthodox, Old Believers, Georgian, Armenian Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches, Synagogues, Buddhists lamaseries, prayer-houses of the Evangelical-Christians-Baptists and Seventh Day Adventists, etc., and 19 monasteries and convents of the Russian Orthodox Church."

(Vladimir Kuroyedov, Church and Religion in the USSR, Novosty, Moscow, 1982) p.31)

Q.15. Do you think the official estimate exaggerates the situation?

Answer:No. It is quite accurate, in so far as it says 'more than 20,000'. According to my own estimate, the number of Russian Orthodox churches open alone comes to about 20,000. When we add the other 12 denominations and the Muslims, Buddhists and Jews, the number must be much larger.

Q.16. Are the churches, mosques and synagogues fairly well attended?

Answer:My own experience is that wherever I have gone in the Soviet Union, the churches were full to capacity. There is a larger proportion of women than men, more older people than young people, and few children. On feast days, all the churches overflow their capacity.

Q.17. How is the Russian Orthodox Church organised? What is your estimate of its total membership?

Answer:Estimates are difficult. Present estimates vary from 40 million to 70 million members in the Russian Orthodox Church. That makes it the second largest church in the world next only to The Roman Catholic Church. The Russian Orthodox Church is organised in 76 dioceses with that many Bishops, each diocese having hundreds of parishes in it. Outside the Soviet Union it has three exarchates' Western European, Central European and Central and South American, with parishes & Bishops and priests in all these areas.

Q.18. How is the administration carried out?

Answer:The highest authority is the 'Local Council', headed by Patriarch Pimen of Moscow and All Russia, with all Bishops, and representatives of the clergy and laity. The Holy Synod is the Executive Body, with five permanent members and three temporary members chosen to attend for six months each. The Holy Synod chooses Bishops for the dioceses, supervises their consecration (one hundred and twenty nine Bishops consecrated 1945-71, and about 50 since). Under the Holy Synod there are the following bodies:

- a) The Chancellery of the Patriarch of Moscow and all Russia, responsible for general administration of the whole church, headed by Metropolitan Aleksy of Tallinn and Estonia,
- b) The Department of External Church Relations, headed by Metropolitan Filaret of Minsk and Byelorussia,
- c) The Commission on Christian Unity, headed by Metropolitan Filaret of Kiev and Galich, Patriarchal Exarch of the Ukraine,
- d) The Publishing Department of the Moscow Patriarchate, headed by Archbishop Pitirim of Volokolamsk; publishes, worship manuals, church calendars, theological journals and books, produces films, cassettes and other recordings about the church,
- e) The Economic Management Department, headed by Protopresbyter Matfey Stadnyuk, in charge of manufacturing candles, church utensils, restoration of churches etc.
- f) The Educational Committee, also headed by Metropolitan Aleksey, supervises theological education and training of the clergy,
- g) The Pensions Committee, in charge of pensions for older priests and families of deceased priests.

All together, these establishments constitute several hundreds of full time workers.

Q.19. How is each parish administered and financed?

Answer:Each parish is administered by the parish assembly. The smaller parish council, consisting of a church warden, his assistant and a treasurer, carries out the daily management and pays the parish priest and other employees. There is also an auditing council to check accounts every year. The churches are all financed by voluntary contributions of members.

Q.20. What institutions exist for the training of clergy, and do young people come forward in sufficient numbers to serve the churches?

Answer:There are three seminaries, in Moscow, Leningrad and Odessa, and two higher theological academies, I Moscow and Leningrad. Except in Leningrad, the Institutions are located in monasteries and follow the monastic discipline. The first year candidates are grouped into separate classes because of large numbers.

There are seven such classes in the three seminaries. The Seminary programme is four years, and the academy another four years. The number of students who apply each year are much more than can be accommodated, and there are several hundreds of candidates who take the course by correspondence. More than a thousand have graduated from these institutions in the past few years. There are also foreign students at these institutions, from some 20 different countries. The Leningrad Academy has an excellent library with more than 200,000 volumes, in many languages.

Q.21. What are the major publications of the R O C?

Answer:Printing the Bible and liturgical books is a first priority. Four editions of the Russian Bible have recently been published, and a fifth elaborate illustrated one, with the best Church art of the 13th to 19th centuries is now in preparation. 20 volumes of Theological Studies have been published in 1960-80 and more are being printed. The monthly Journal of the Moscow Patriarchate is published in Russian and in English. There are several books and booklets published each year. A comprehensive and well illustrated book on The Russian Orthodox Church was published by Progress Publishers (a secular publishing house) in 1982, and provided interesting information on all aspects of the life of the Russian Orthodox Church (254 pages).

Q.22. Is there religious prosecution in the USSR?

Answer:The Western media have always tried to give that impression. The fact of the matter is that the Government does not take any action against anyone on account his or her religious belief. In all the publicised cases, it is clear that the persons arrested have violated Soviet law, and have been charged under a distinct provision of the law. Article 34 of the Fundamental Law (Constitution) is very clear.

"Citizens of the USSR are equal before the law, without distinction of origin, social or property status, race or nationality, sex, education, language attitude to religion, type and nature of occupation, domicile or other status. The equal rights of citizens of the USSR are guaranteed in all fields of economic, political, social and cultural life."

Quite often, a religious cover is used to disguise political activity, detrimental to the Soviet State. Most of the prosecutions are on grounds of political offences, and are tried and disposed on that basis and not on the basis of one's religious affiliation.

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